

I would like to give you my input regarding how much financial support you are providing to video relay service providers. I believe that most people tend to think about the TTY and video relay services as something that primarily impact deaf people. However, the deaf people are using these services to communicate with hearing people, thus hearing people are equally impacted. I have several deaf friends and I will be the first one to admit that when I pick up the phone and hear it's the TTY relay service calling, I sigh and try to decide if I have the time to take a TTY relay call. These calls require two or even three times as long to finish as they would if the call was being placed directly between two hearing people. The fact that you cannot interrupt and must wait your turn, plus the fact the hearing person must slow their speech so the relay operator can type what they are saying makes for a very tedious and slow process. Plus, some of the deaf people don't necessarily type all that fast either, even slowing the process down further.

I first experienced a video relay service call last September. What a difference! Having an interpreter on the other end of the line is as close to direct communication as I can imagine ever getting with my deaf friends. The conversations are SO much faster as I can speak at my normal speed and the deaf person can sign much faster than they can type. An added benefit is that the interpreter is able to use the sound of his/her voice to indicate the deaf persons' mood/feelings. Also, some of my deaf friends struggle with English and by having the conversation communicated in sign language I don't have to worry about clarifying because I choose a word the deaf person is not familiar with.

I encourage the people making the decision about how much to compensate video relay service providers to make (or receive) a call through both services. Make sure the call is about the same general thing so that you can have a real comparison. I think members of the FCC will be shocked to find that the TTY relay service can't come close to comparing with video relay. Video relay is so much more like a real conversation whereas the TTY relay is cumbersome and time-consuming. The video relay beats the TTY relay hands-down in providing a way for deaf people to communicate with hearing people.

You should also talk to hearing business owners who have experienced plenty of TTY relay calls and get their input. They can tell you that accepting a TTY relay call takes valuable time out of their day. With the video relay service it doesn't have to be that way anymore. Speaking with deaf customers through an interpreter allows business owners to communicate with the deaf at the same speed (or very close to it) as they are able to communicate with hearing customers.

Please reconsider the value of the video relay service and ensure that it does not shut down.

Sincerely,

Diana Walsh O'Toole